

Remarks on Implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

January 9, 2002

Thank you all so very much for that warm welcome. It's really great to be here with so many men and women who have made education your life's work.

Yesterday I had the high honor of signing H.R. 1—the No Child Left Behind Act—which begins a new and hopeful era for American education. We're bringing new resources and higher standards to struggling schools. We're placing greater emphasis on the basics of reading and math. And we're giving parents better information and more say in how their sons and daughters are educated.

Two decades ago, experts looked at public education and saw "A Nation At Risk." A nation described at risk is now a nation on the road to reform.

I am so proud of what our administration and Members of Congress from both political parties have achieved. We have shown what is possible in Washington, DC. We have shown that if you put the Nation's interests ahead of political party, you can achieve mighty, mighty reform.

The House and the Senate passed education legislation by overwhelming margins. I signed the legislation into law. And now much of the real work begins. Now we must turn our principles into progress and progress into excellence and excellence into the lives of hope and achievement.

I want to thank Secretary Rod Paige and all who work at the Department of Education. America is getting to know that I picked a good man to be the Secretary of Education. The guy is down to Earth. He's got a lot of experience. He ran a huge school district in the State of Texas and brought excellence, the standard of excellence, into classrooms in Houston, Texas.

I want to thank three of the four members of our merry band of travelers. *[Laughter]* Yesterday we went around parts of our country together. It was my honor to travel with Miller and Boehner and Kennedy and Judd Gregg. I figure Judd got tired of hearing us, so he peeled off. *[Laughter]*

But I want to repeat some of the things I said yesterday. First of all, I know the folks in Crawford, Texas, won't believe this, but Ted Kennedy is an able, good man. *[Laughter]* This bill would not have happened had he decided not to work to make it happen. He put his mind to it. I learned this: You want him on your side in a legislative battle.

I also want to thank George Miller from the State of California. George is a proud liberal, but also he's a proud author of this bill. He cares deeply about a system that quits on its kids—he wants to change it. I like him so much, I gave him a nickname: Big George. *[Laughter]*

But I've enjoyed working with these two Democrats. They are a credit to their party but, more importantly, a credit to our country.

Yesterday I signed the bill in Chairman Boehner's district. *[Applause]* I knew Boehner had a big family; I didn't realize it was that big. *[Laughter]* I did so because John was a steady influence in the process; he kept the process moving forward, even in the face of 9/11. He said, "We've got to get a bill," and he worked hard to bring people together to get it done. Mr. Chairman, you did a fabulous job, and I thank you.

I want to thank the other Members of Congress who are here. Mike Castle is here from the State of Delaware; Van Hilleary from Tennessee; Johnny Isakson from Georgia; Tim Roemer from Indiana; Bobby Scott from Virginia; and a delegate from Puerto Rico, Delegate Anibal Acevedo-Vila. Thank you for all coming here today.

And then we're going to pass some of the power—as you know, you'll hear soon—out of Washington, and it's going to be up to the Governors to make things happen. And fortunately, we've got four fine Governors with us today: Roy Barnes of Georgia; Sila Calderon of Puerto Rico; Mark Schweiker of Pennsylvania; and my brother. Thank you all for coming.

Republicans and Democrats share the same basic commitments on education. We believe good public schools should not be islands of excellence. They should be found in every city and in every neighborhood in America. We believe that no child should

ever be written off, because every child is important, and every child can learn.

We believe education is a national priority and a local responsibility, that Washington should be giving our schools help, not giving them orders. We share these convictions, and we have acted on them. We have given new tools of reform to teachers and principals, local and State officials, and parents. Now we must finish the job.

We have a great task to complete, and everyone has responsibilities to meet. Those responsibilities begin in the classroom. The No Child Left Behind Act provides new training opportunities for teachers to develop their professional skills and their knowledge. The law gives incentives to hire and train teachers, and it backs up teachers who impose reasonable discipline in their classrooms. We want teachers in charge of their classrooms, not plaintiff's attorneys.

We're also putting more resources into the classroom. This year, the Federal Government will spend more than \$22 billion on elementary and secondary education, an increase of more than 25 percent over last year. Because of our commitment to assist low income students, we will increase spending on Title I by 18 percent. Because teachers are so important, we will increase spending on teacher training by 33 percent. And because reading is the gateway to all learning, we will more than triple Federal funding for early reading programs. We are willing to spend more for education, and we will spend it on what works.

In return for this commitment, my administration and the American people expect results. We expect every child to learn basic skills. We expect failing schools to be turned around. We expect teachers and principals to do their jobs well, to have a firm grasp on their subject matter, and to welcome measurement and accountability.

All who have chosen the noble profession of teaching should know this: We are counting on your energy and your imagination to make these reforms real for America's children. You have our confidence, and you'll have our support.

Local and State officials have responsibilities, as well. Yesterday, I mentioned, I went to Hamilton, Ohio. Then we went to Dur-

ham, New Hampshire, and Boston, Massachusetts. I was with parents and teachers who know the faces and names and needs of their own children. Local schools now have a mandate to reform, and we are giving them the freedom to reform.

It is the job of the local folks to chart the path for excellence for every single child in America, and we trust them to do so. As a result of this bill, local officials now have unprecedented flexibility to decide where to spend money and target reforms. We are increasing support and funding for research into teaching methods that work. And we will spend almost \$400 million to help States design and administer tests. In return, we expect States to set standards of basic knowledge and to make steady progress toward meeting those standards. Every student in grades three through eight will be tested in reading and math.

Every time I talk about testing, I sometimes see people wince—particularly, the students. They don't like to take tests. *[Laughter]* My attitude is, too bad. *[Laughter]* How can you correct problems if you do not diagnose the problem in the first place?

In order to make sure children are not simply shuffled through the system, we must measure. We must determine what needs to be corrected early, before it's too late. States must show us that overall student achievement is improving, and as importantly, they must show that the achievement gap between the disadvantaged students and other students is closing. And in particular, in grades three through eight, all school districts—I mean all school districts—must show that students can read and write effectively.

I expect most schools will rise to the challenge. I believe that. Some may not, and they must be held accountable. They will have time to improve; they will have incentives to improve; and they will have the resources to improve, as a result of this bill. And if they still do not improve, there are real consequences and new options for parents.

The local and State officials in charge of America's schools carry a great trust, and we really are counting on you all. You are the rising generation of reformers. You can serve

your community, and you can serve your country. Do not settle for mediocrity. Accept no excuses. Set high goals and raise them again and keep raising the standards. That is the task of leadership, and we trust you to take it on.

The success of these reforms also depends on parents. To be a mom or a dad is to be your child's first and most important teacher. So under this new law, parents will have the information they need to do what is best for their children. Parents will have access to an annual report card on school performance. And they'll have access to statewide results. They will know the qualifications of the teachers and their children's achievements in key subjects. If schools persistently fail their children, parents will have more options: a better public school, a charter school, or a tutor.

In return, we expect that parents will use this information. Parents need to pay attention to school performance. They should insist on results, and when necessary, they must be strong advocates for change. They should offer praise when they can and pressure when it's called for. If you're a parent, visit your child's school; get to know the teachers and principals; support the school; and demand excellence. And remember that every child should come to school ready to learn. Good manners and respect for teachers are learned at home. Good study habits are reinforced by mothers and fathers who are willing to switch off the TV set and turn off video games to make sure the homework gets done. As parents, you're entitled to expect a lot from schools and teachers, and schools and teachers are entitled to expect some things from you, as well.

This Nation has waited many years for major reform in education. We've now achieved it. And we're wasting no time in implementing it. Tonight Secretary Paige will meet with State education leaders on plans to put these reforms to work.

This is an hour of promise for America's public schools. My signature is now on the law, but it was the work of many hands. Together, we have overcome old arguments and outdated policies. And now, together, let us see these changes through until every school succeeds and no child is left behind.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:28 p.m. at DAR Constitution Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Roy E. Barnes of Georgia; Gov. Sila M. Calderon of Puerto Rico; Gov. Mark Schweiker of Pennsylvania; and Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida. The President also referred to Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law No. 103-382), which amended Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law No. 89-10).

Statement on the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan

January 9, 2002

On June 4, 2001, I joined the Governor of Florida in visiting the Everglades. The Everglades and the entire south Florida ecosystem are a unique national treasure. The restoration of this ecosystem is a priority for my administration, as well as for Governor Bush. Today we are very pleased to solidify our commitment and full partnership in this unprecedented endeavor by signing a joint agreement to ensure that adequate water supplies will be available to benefit State and federally owned natural resources.

The Water Resources Development Act of 2000 authorized the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. The plan has a projected cost of \$7.8 billion over 30 years, the largest ecosystem restoration project ever undertaken. The plan establishes a unique 50/50 cost-sharing partnership between the State of Florida and the Federal Government.

A critical component of the plan relates to the supply and management of water for multiple uses in south Florida—restoration, municipal, agricultural, and flood control. The Congress determined that the overarching objective of the plan is the restoration, preservation, and protection of the south Florida ecosystem, while providing for other water-related needs of the region, including water supply and flood protection.

Because the Federal Government's primary interest is in restoration and protection of the federally owned natural resources in the State, the Congress called for the President and the Governor to agree formally that